PREFACE.

His Majesty's ship, Beagle, under the command of Captain FitzRoy, was commissioned in July, 1831, for the purpose of surveying the southern parts of America, and afterwards of circumnavigating the world. In consequence of Captain FitzRoy having expressed a desire that some scientific person should be on board, and having offered to give up part of his own accommodations, I volunteered my services; and through the kindness of the hydrographer, Captain Beaufort, my appointment received the sanction of the Admiralty. I must here, as on all other occasions, take the opportunity of publicly acknowledging with gratitude, the obligation under which I lie to Captain FitzRoy, and to all the Officers on board the Beagle, for their constant assistance in my scientific pursuits, and for their uniform kindness to me throughout the voyage. On my return (October, 1836) to England, I found myself in possession